(b) if so, whether it is a fact that Comptroller and Auditor General has criticised the Chairperson and Members of Telecom Regulatory Authority for exceeding their powers relating to personal entitlement;

(c) if so, whether the matter is investigated by Government so far;

(d) if so, the details of the enquiry and action taken thereon; and

(e) the future course of action proposed to be taken to avoid such situation?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) and (b) Yes Sir. Prior to issue of Government notification regulating terms and conditions of service of Chairperson, TRAI and other Members w.e.f. 15.3.99 TRAI had issued internal orders regulating personal entitlements etc. of the Chairperson and members. Some of these provisions have been adversely commented upon by the C&AG of India in his report No. 4 covering "other autonomous bodies" presented to Parliament on 29th October, 1999.

(c) to (e) The Department has issued orders regularising the expenditure incurred by Chairperson and Members from the date of assumption of their office till 14.3.99. For the period from 15.3.99 onwards the terms and conditions of their service are governed by the notifications issued by Government in terms of Section 35(2)(a) of the TRAI Act. Alongwith certain relaxations and additional facilities given subsequently.

Other observations contained in the Audit report are being examined and suitable remedial steps will be taken.

Damage Caused to Telecommunications Network in Orissa by Cyclone

670. SHRI BHAGABAN MAJHI: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) the extent of damage caused to Telecommunications network due to super Cyclone which swept over Orissa on 29th October, 1999;

(b) the estimated loss thereof; and

(c) the steps taken to restore the telecommunication system at Paradip, Jagatsingpur and other Cyclone affected district?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) 300 Telephone Exchanges were damaged due to super cyclone in Orissa.

(b) Rs. 107 Crores (approximately).

(c) Immediate steps were taken to restore the long distance trunk routes by re-engineering and rerouting the circuits wherever possible. In other inaccessible district Headquarters, the telecommunication facilities were provided by deploying Satellite phones. Thereafter, works to restore telecommunications facility have been taken up on war footing giving priorities to District Head Quarters/ Sub-divisional Headquarters and other important telecommunication facilities. 232 exchanges have since been restored. STD to all affected district Headquarters and Tehsil Headquarters have also been restored. Only 68 exchanges, which are deep inside the villages are pending for restoration. These exchanges are likely to be restored during December progressively. Telecom Services at Bhubaneshwar, Dhenkanal, Anandpur, Cuttack, Khurda, Puri, Kendrapara, Jagatsingpur, Balasore, Bhadrak and Jajpur were restored by 07-11-1999 in a phased manner.

Setting up of New Telephone Exchanges in Orissa

671. SHRI BHAGABAN MAJHI: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal under the consideration of Government to set up new telephone exchanges in Orissa;

(b) whether these telephone exchanges are in addition to the existing damaged exchanges due to cyclone; and

(c) if so, the details of the proposals of Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) Yes Sir.

(b) Yes Sir.